

# Carpal Tunnel Exercises

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a quite common health problem. It is most often caused by doing hand or wrist movements over and over. It can also be caused by using the lower arm muscles too much.

The carpal tunnel is the small area in your wrist that your median nerve runs through. A tough band of tissues called a ligament holds everything in place over the carpal tunnel. Your median nerve runs from your lower arm into your hand. If this nerve is squeezed at the wrist area, you may feel pain and have other signs. Your hand, fingers, and wrist may feel weak, numb, or tingly. This is called carpal tunnel syndrome. Your doctor may want you to try exercises to help your signs. Other times, you will do these exercises after surgery.

## General

Before starting with a program, ask your doctor if you are healthy enough to do these exercises. Your doctor may have you work with a trainer or physical therapist to make a safe exercise program to meet your needs.

### **Stretching Exercises**

Stretching exercises keep your muscles flexible. They also stop them from getting tight. Start by doing each of these stretches 2 to 3 times. In order for your body to make changes, you will need to hold these stretches for 20 to 30 seconds. Repeat each exercise 2 to 3 times each day. Do all exercises slowly.

- Wrist stretches bending back – Straighten your elbow and have your palm facing up. Keeping your elbow straight, bend your wrist back so that your fingers are now pointing to the floor. Grab your hand with your other hand and push back the wrist until you feel a stretch. If you just had surgery, you should not do this exercise until your therapist or doctor tells you it is OK.

### **Strengthening Exercises**

Strengthening exercises keep your muscles firm and strong. Sit while doing these exercises. Be sure to use good posture. Start by repeating each exercise 2 to 3 times. Work up to doing each exercise 10 times. Try to do the exercises 2 to 3 times each day. Do all exercises slowly.

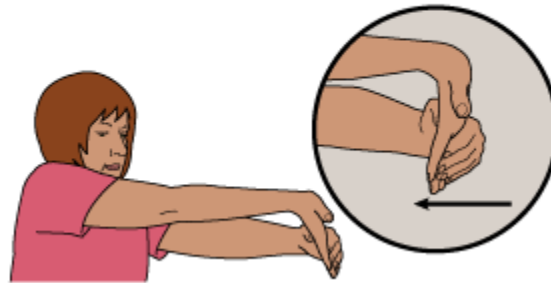
- Tendon gliding exercises using 4 positions – Start by holding your hand with your fingers straight. Then, bend only the last two joints of your fingers and move your fingers into a hook or claw position. Next, straighten your fingers and bend your knuckles to make a flat table top position. This is also called the duckbill position. Last, make a full fist. Moving your hand into all 4 positions is one exercise.

- Wrist exercises:
  - Side-to-side – Hold one arm still using your other hand. Move your hand from side to side.
  - Up and down – Hold one arm still using your other hand. Bend your wrist up and down.
- Wrist circles – Move each wrist in a circle in one direction. Now, move each wrist in a circle in the other direction.

## Exercises

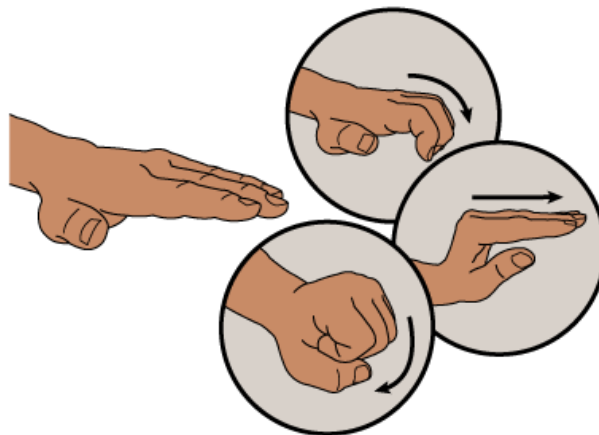
This is an image of a woman with her right arm extended straight in front of her. She is holding her right palm with her left hand and her right palm is facing forwards. There is a callout showing her pulling her right palm back towards her body.

### Wrist Stretches Bending Back

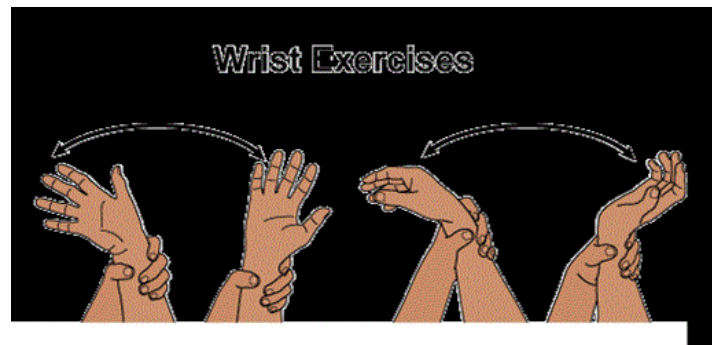


This is a series of images of the left hand with the palm facing down. In the first image, the fingers are together and extended out straight. The next image shows the fingers beginning to curl downward at the end joints. The next image shows the fingers straight, but they are bent at the knuckle where they join the hand. The final image shows the fingers curled into a fist.

### Tendon Gliding Exercises



This is a series of images showing someone using the left hand to steady the right wrist



to move the right hand from side to side and up and down

This is an image of a wrist and hand showing how the wrist is moving in circles

## What will the results be?

- Less pain, pressure, stiffness, and swelling in your wrist and hand
- Ease numbness and tingling in your hand and fingers
- Increased blood flow to the nerves, muscles, and joints of your wrist and hand to help healing
- Increased hand and grip strength
- Keep your muscles and joints strong and flexible

## Helpful tips

- Stay active and work out to keep your muscles strong and flexible.
- Be sure you do not hold your breath when exercising. This can raise your blood pressure. If you tend to hold your breath, try counting out loud when exercising. If any exercise bothers you, stop right away.
- Always warm up before stretching. Heated muscles stretch much easier than cool muscles. Stretching cool muscles can lead to injury.
- Try walking and swinging your arms at an easy pace for a few minutes to warm up your muscles. Do this again after exercising.
- Never bounce when doing stretches.
- Doing exercises before a meal may be a good way to get into a routine.
- Exercise may be slightly uncomfortable, but you should not have sharp pains. If you do get sharp pains, stop what you are doing. If the sharp pains continue, call your doctor.